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ABSTRACT

A quasi-experimental study determined the effectiveness of teacher conferences as a modeling technique in freshman composition, as measured by the quantity and quality of selected characteristics in peer response group discourse. Subjects, 22 students in the "experimental" section and 24 students in another section of second semester freshman composition at a medium-sized public university in the southwestern United States, were trained using "traditional" modeling techniques. The 22 students in the experimental section received in addition a treatment of a heretofore undocumented modeling technique--teacher conferences. A total of 10 students in each class completed the first five papers assigned in the semester and were present for tape-recordings of peer-response groups. Transcripts of peer-response group discussion of the students' first paper served as the pretest, and transcripts of peer-group discussion of the fifth paper served as the posttest. Results indicated that the experimental group improved its performance by a fair margin: in the role of writer, subjects asked many more questions of their peers; the questions were more phatic; and subjects dramatically increased the revision suggestions per episode. Results also indicated that the "traditional" group were less phatic in the role of writer, asked fewer questions and made fewer revision suggestions than before. Findings suggest that peer response groups are characterized by tremendous variation, and that intensive training may be needed to make peer response successful. (Includes six tables of data. The rubric for coding idea units is attached. Contains 19 references.) (RS)

Teacher Conferences as a Modeling Technique for Peer Response

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Teacher Conferences as a Modeling Technique
for Peer Response

For approximately the past twenty years, peer response groups--groups of students reading and making revision suggestions on one another's papers--have become an increasingly common feature of composition classes. There are sound reasons for this. First, peer response groups imitate the "real-world" relationship that skilled or professional writers have with their colleagues and editors. In addition, peer response is consonant with the writings of pyschologists such as Lev Vygotsky (1978, 1986) and Jerome Bruner (1978), which state that social language use is necessary for the development of the "inner voice" of individual cognition.

Teachers, too, have endorsed peer response (see, for example, Moffett, 1968; Murray, 1968; Macrorie, 1970; Elbow, 1973), but often they have found that it is not automatically successful. One reason is that students simply have not fully developed the analytical skills necessary to give accurate critiques, to see a piece of writing as a set of realized and unrealized possibilities (Connors, 1990). And because the role of peer responder is new to them, many students tend to slip into a role they have seen modeled many times, that of a teacher. The teacher role creates psychological distance and social hierarchy between members of the group, thus undermining its intent as collaboration among equals (Spear, 1988).

To overcome these problems and in order to facilitate peer response, teachers have drawn on a number of techniques, which can be divided into two broad categories. The first intervenes to constrain or modify group discourse. This category includes the use of worksheets that script student response (see, for example, Wauters, 1988; Freedman, 1992). It also includes Peter Elbow's procedure, outlined in Writing Without Teachers (1973), in which a student reads his/her paper aloud twice. During the first reading, the peers listen only. Between readings and during the second reading, they make notes on points they would like to comment on. After the second reading, the peers share their comments one at a time, and the writer takes notes of them. When this procedure is completed, "open discussion" can take place.

The other category is modeling. Modeling consists of pre-teaching techniques that train students in the skills necessary for successful peer response. This is often

accomplished by analyzing, in a teacher-fronted or small group setting, student writing collected by the teacher from previous courses (Carter, 1982), or drafts of the teachers own writing (Benesch, 1984), to determine its strengths and weaknesses. Some teachers also model the language of successful peer groups, through the analysis of recorded and transcribed discourse, in order to establish the need for text-specific and non-threatening comments (Benesch, 1984).

Both of these types of techniques present problems for the teachers who want their students to have a conversation about their writing. While the intervention techniques do not presume to tell students what to say, they do constrain turn-taking, and consequently the opportunity to negotiate meaning between writer and peers is reduced. And worksheets, although designed as a heuristic for response, can be perceived by students as the teacher's task, not their own. Freedman (1992) found in two ninth-grade classes that most of the talk of peer groups was concerned with completing worksheets to the teacher's satisfaction, and only 18 to 24% of the talk was about the students' writing itself.

The modeling techniques, on the other hand, do not put constraints on discourse patterns, but they do assume the ability to generalize; that students will be able to apply the critical insights they were exposed to in the analysis of models to the writing and writers they encounter in their own peer groups. This assumption of transferability has not been sufficiently validated in the scholarly research about peer response groups.

This study describes a quasi-experimental research project in which two classes were trained using "traditional" modeling techniques. The students in one class, the experiment group, in addition received a treatment of a heretofore undocumented modeling technique, teacher conferences. The goal of the study was to determine the effectiveness of this new technique in comparison to the traditional ones, as measured by the quantity and quality of selected characteristics in the peer response group discourse.

Method

Participants

The study took place at a medium-sized public university in the Southwestern United States during Spring semester, 1993. The participants were enrolled in two sections of English 102, a course entitled Freshman Composition, Second Semester. Both classes met on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays; one from 11:30 a.m. to 12:20 p.m., the other from 12:40 to 1:30 p.m. (The 11:30 class was designated as the experiment group after the peer response for the first paper, which served as the pre-test for this

study. This decision was made on the instructor's anecdotal impression that this class had not handled peer response as well as the other, and the ethical consideration that students who needed help the most should get the additional instruction of the treatment. For a full explanation of the initial differences between the experiment and traditional classes, see the "Discussion" section, below.)

The experiment section had an enrollment of 22 students; the traditional section 24. In a survey conducted during the first week of class, all of the students said that they had used peer response groups in other writing courses. Only one student, who had been in one of the instructor's English 101 sections in the preceding semester, had been exposed to teacher conferences as a modeling technique for peer response. For this reason, he was automatically eliminated for consideration as a subject in the study (see "Transcription and Coding of the Data," below, for a complete description of how subjects were selected from class participants).

Both sections were taught by the writer, a graduate Teaching Assistant who had, at the time, twelve years of teaching experience, including four years of teaching composition at the university level.

Writing Assignments/Peer Response Group Format

The research project was conducted over the span of the first five writing assignments of the semester. The assignments were taken from the class text, Rose and Kinniry's Critical Strategies, first edition (1990): in the order that the students did them, they involved the "critical strategies" of defining, summarizing, classifying, serializing, and comparing.

Each assignment had at least four options. The students were instructed to skim all of the options, and then to choose the one in which they were most interested. According to these choices, peer response groups consisting of three students were formed . The best-case scenario would have each class divided into eight groups of three students each; the students in each group working on the same option. In actual practice however, this never occurred. Some groups were comprised of two students, some of four; if only one student had chosen a given option, he/she was asked to join two students working on a different option. Of the seventeen peer response groups whose discourse was transcribed and analyzed for this study, two consisted of two students, two of four students, and one of three students working on different options.

This selection of topics and formation of peer groups took place on a Wednesday or Friday. On the following Monday, students were to come to class with photocopies of their draft writing to exchange with their peer groupmates. Between this exchange of

drafts and the peer group meetings, which took place during class time on Wednesday, the students were told to read their peers' papers carefully and to reflect on what comments they might make on them. This two day interval also created a space for the teacher to confer with each student in the experiment class about what he/she might say about his/her peer's writing. (See Table One for a schematic representation of the assignment timeline and research design.)

Training for Peer Response

Students in both classes received "traditional" modeling instruction, on the Friday or on the Monday prior to the meeting of the peer response groups, for each of the first three papers. For the first paper, this training was a teacher-fronted discussion. The teacher established that peer response day was the students' time, and that they were free to structure their remarks in any way that they thought appropriate. But in addition, the following recommendations were made:

1 the students should be aware that everyone in a peer response group fulfilled two roles, as the writer of a paper under discussion and as a responder to the writing of others;

2 for both roles, it was important to ask questions.

a Writers should ask their peers what they thought about aspects of the writing,

b responders should ask writers what their intentions were before making revision suggestions, and they should confirm with writers that their suggestions were helpful;

3 the emphasis of the response group should be on revision suggestions, not editing;

4 the writer, the person whose paper was under discussion, should speak first, in order to direct the conversation in such a way that he/she got the information needed to revise the paper.

Prior to the second paper, the training consisted of analyzing the transcript of a particularly successful peer response episode taken from the instructor's pilot study data of the previous semester. In this episode, the writer is a Native Alaskan whose paper describes the problem of unemployment among young men in her home town, a village of several hundred people north of the Arctic Circle. Her two responders are natives of metropolitan Phoenix. They negotiate with her to establish the need to define terms--she uses the word "bachelor" in a way unfamiliar to them--and to describe context.

Table One
Assignment Timeline and Research Design

(The first column represents the day and week of the semester; e.g. F/2 is the Friday of the second week.)

	Experiment Class		Traditional Class
		Paper One	
F/2	Ss exchange drafts		Ss exchange drafts
M/3	Peer Response	(Pre-test; recorded)	Peer Response
	Ss revise		Ss revise
W/3	Final drafts turned in		Final drafts turned in
		Paper Two	
M/5	Ss exchange drafts		Ss exchange drafts
	TEACHER CONFERENCES		
W/5	Peer Response		Peer Response
	Ss revise		Ss revise
F/5	Final drafts turned in		Final drafts turned in
		Paper Three	
M/7	Ss exchange drafts		Ss exchange drafts
	TEACHER CONFERENCES	(recorded)	
W/7	Peer Response		Peer Response
	Ss revise		Ss revise
F/7	Final drafts turned in		Final drafts turned in
		Paper Five	
M/9	Ss exchange drafts		Ss exchange drafts
W/9	Peer Response	(Post-test; recorded)	Peer Response
	Ss revise		Ss revise
F/9	Final drafts turned in	(T keeps copies)	Final drafts turned in

The training before the third paper also involved analyzing a pilot study transcript. In this episode, the responders provide good feedback, but the writer does not show involvement: he doesn't use confirmation checks, backchannels, or politeness markers. Although in the transcript the responders seem undetered by the writer's lack of demonstrated interest in their comments, the students were asked how they would feel if their comments were not received in a more cooperative way. Their answers led to a discussion about how to show involvement in conversation, and how to couch suggestions in such a way that they don't seem harshly critical.

Experimental Treatment

In addition to this in-class training, each student in the experiment group had a treatment of two teacher conferences, one for the second and the other for the third assignment. These conferences took place between the time the students exchanged drafts on Monday and the peer groups met on Wednesday. The students were asked to read their peers' draft writing carefully and to bring the drafts with them to the conferences.

The conferences lasted fifteen minutes. Typically, a conference would begin by the instructor asking the student, "of the two papers you've read, which would you say is the more difficult to respond to?" The student's reply to this question dictated how the instructor handled the remainder of the conference. If the student replied that both pieces of writing were easy to respond to, the instructor would ask for a verbal summary of one of the papers and what the student intended to tell the writer about it in the peer response group. If the summary and response seemed plausible, the instructor would move to pre-closing remarks to draw the conference to its conclusion.

If, on the other hand, the student's remarks did not seem plausible, or if the student admitting to not knowing how to respond to a given piece of writing, the teacher would read the draft. After he had finished reading, he would ask questions of the student that were based on what he had seen in the writing. A common starting place would be to ask the student how he/she understood the assignment criteria, and if the piece of writing was addressing those criteria. Another line of questioning was to help the student see possibilities in the assignment that were unexploited in the writing. For example, a popular option for the third assignment called for devising a classification system for fifteen pieces of art from the 1920s. Draft writing of this assignment would often neatly divide the paintings into categories that lacked an overarching organizing principle or that did not help the reader to understand or appreciate the art in any way. If this were the case in a piece of writing under discussion, the teacher might ask the student, "all of these paintings are from the 1920s. Do you think that this classification

system addresses what is interesting or unique about that time period? Does this paper help you to see things in the art that you didn't see before?" From answers to questions such as these, the student and instructor together would begin to shape the comments that the student could transmit to the writer in the peer response group.

The conferences would almost always conclude with the instructor asking the student to represent him/herself in the peer response group, and not simply to report what the instructor had said about a piece of writing. And the instructor would ask the student, "based on what we have discussed about this writing, can you anticipate what your groupmates might say about your paper?" Even if the student had no predictions at that time, the instructor believed that posing the problem was an important component of the conference, because it encouraged the student to think about his/her role of writer, and not just of responder.

Data Collection

The instructor arrived to class early on the days that the peer response groups for the first and the fifth assignments took place. He arranged the desks so that the three or four students in each group would face one another. He also placed an audiocassette recorder on a chair or an empty desk next to the group.

After the students had arrived, the teacher made some preliminary remarks reminding the students of the points that had been discussed in class about the purpose of peer response. Then he asked the students to push the "record" buttons on their cassette players, and to leave the tape running until their group was completely finished. At that time, they could consider the class over and they were free to leave.

Transcription and Coding of the Data

The instructor reviewed his class records at the end of the semester to determine which students in both groups had complete data sets--for the traditional group, those who had participated in peer response for the first, second, third, and fifth assignments; for the experiment group, those who had participated in the response groups and who had, in addition, attended two conferences. Those students (coincidentally ten in each class) are the subjects of this study. Only the recorded discourse of those response groups whose members included at least one subject were transcribed. There were a total of seventeen of them: four each for the experiment group's pre-test and post-test, and five for the traditional group's pre-test and four for the post-test.

Unlike other units for transcribing discourse which reflect overt characteristics suchs as one person's speech bounded by the speech of others (turns) or syntax (t-

units), the unit of analysis in this study seeks to identify the underlying mental state of the speaker--his/her focus of attention--as it is manifested in speech. It is called an idea unit.

Inspired by Halliday's (1967) "information units" and Grimes' (1975) "tone units," idea units were developed by Chafe (1980) to work with the data of The Pear Stories. Although Chafe is appropriately circumspect in his claims that we can ever know the thought processes of others, he believes that we can glean an approximate understanding of the speaker's object of consciousness from verbal output. Idea units, he contends, end with one or more of the following traits:

1 a pause;

2 rising or falling intonation;

3 grammatical closure (i.e. the end of a phrase or clause).

There are several advantages to using idea units in this study. One is that they are relatively easy to identify and require no formal parsing--a tremendous aid when dealing with large amounts of data (as in this case: 226 pages of transcript). Another is that they "look right;" in statistical terms, they have high face validity. Finally, they have a precedent in the peer response group literature: idea units were first used by Gere and Abbott (1985) and Gere and Stevens (1985).

Each idea unit is coded on three dimensions: linguistic function, attention area, and specific focus. The first two have been borrowed intact from Gere and Abbott (1985) and Gere and Stevens (1985).

Linguistic Function

> The first dimension distinguish[es] among the three major language acts or functions: inform, direct, or elicit. As defined by Sinclair and Coulthard (1978), these functions operate as follows: elicitation requests a linguistic response or non-verbal surrogate; directive requests a non-linguistic response; and informative passes on ideas, facts, opinions, and information (p. 28). These three functions [are] used to categorize the discourse types of each unit. Although inform, direct, and elicit are similar to grammatical units of statement, command, and question, they differ in focusing on rhetorical context rather than grammatical meaning. For example, the idea unit "Are you ready?" would be a question in grammatical terms, but when the group chair uses this question to indicate it is time for the next author to read, the question has a directive function. (Gere and Abbott, 1985, p. 387)

Area of Attention

The second dimension indicates whether a piece of student writing or the group itself is the general object of attention.

Specific Focus

The third dimension in the coding system indicates specific focus of consciousness. In the Gere and Abbott (1985) and Gere and Stevens (1985) studies, there were five such foci: procedures and processes, content, form, context, and reference. In the present study there are four foci: procedures and processes, context, discourse-level features, and local-level features.

This dimension has been reconfigured to make it more sensitive to results of instruction. The Gere and Abbott and Gere and Stevens studies code any recommendation to improve writing--be it revision or editing--as DWP: Direct Writing Processes. But it is an often documented phenomenon that students will avoid making revision suggestions and will instead focus their remarks on the rule-governed, sentence-level aspects of language: spelling, punctuation, and grammar (see, for example, Freedman, 1992, and Spear, 1988). To get information on this issue, and in order to determine if students, with the experience of in-class discussion and/or teacher conferences as modeling techniques, would make more revision comments, those idea units were coded DWd. Editing suggestions were coded DWl.

A listing of all permutations of the coding system, and descriptors and examples for each permutation, is found in Appendix One.

The writer coded each of the 5,733 ideas units in the seventeen transcripts. After an interval of two weeks, he used a random number table to select 33 pages of transcript (15% of the total number of pages) and coded the 870 idea units that they contained. Scoring agreement on an all or nothing basis (that is, if the two codings did not match on all three dimensions for a given idea unit, they were discrepant), the intra-rater reliability, expressed in percent terms, was .85.

A graduate student in Applied Linguistics generously volunteered her time to help the writer establish inter-rater reliability. He spent approximately one hour reviewing the coding system and rubric with her, and then she independently coded another set of the same 33 pages that had been randomly selected for intra-rater reliability. Scoring agreement on the same all or nothing basis, the coefficient for inter-rater reliability was Cohen's kappa k = .74. Cohen's kappa is a conservative test that corrects for random agreement in a way that simple percentage agreement does not; for that reason, criterial levels for acceptable agreement are lower. Wilkinson (1992,

p. 569) says that values of kappa greater than .75 indicate strong agreement, and values of from .40 to .79 are described as ranging from fair to good.

Analysis of Data

The tallies of each subject in the roles of writer and responder form the statistical basis of this study. Five coding categories were judged to be especially sensitive measures of the skills the instructor had tried to develop through training for peer response. Two of them are for the role of writer:

EWd, asking questions of the responders about the piece of writing; and

H, phatic--backchanneling and use of politeness markers.

For the role of responder, the three codings are:

EWd, asking questions of the writer about the piece of writing;

DWd, making revision suggestions; and

DWl, making editing suggestions.

A profile of each of these codings is found in Tables Three through Seven. The profiles consist of raw dataand box plots in order that the reader may have two different perspectives from which to judge for him/herself what changes occurred in the subjects' behavior during this research project. This is necessary because the data does not lend itself unambiguously to any statistical test; it is not sufficiently interval to fit comfortably in an analysis of variance because it is in the form of frequency counts. Frequencies would indicate that a measure of rates and proportions, such as a chi-square test, would be in order, but it is not apparent how such a test could be run to investigate the five instruction-sensitive codings.

Results

Initial Differences Between Classes

In quasi-experimental research projects, such as this one, subjects have not been randomly selected and assigned into groups. So one may assume--in fact, it is axiomatic that one must assume--that the groups are different.

Even with this understanding, the differences between the two classes as measured by the pre-test require some explanation. The traditional class outperformed the experiment one on all five of the critical measures; for instance, in the role of

Table Two
EWd for the Role of Writer

EWd Elicits information about a piece of student writing at the discourse level; includes concerns of audience and purpose, organization, and grammar above the sentence level.

"Do you think it [ie the writer's paper] was too wordy?"

"Do you think I need to expand more?"

Writer's speculative comments that seem to seek confirmation from peers are also coded EWd.

"I think maybe I could have expounded on the mood,

I think I should write more about that."

	Experiment Class		Traditional Class	
	pre-test	post-test	pre-test	post-test
min	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
max	5.0	10.0	17.0	20.0
range	5.0	10.0	17.0	20.0
mean	1.3	4.7	3.0	5.4
sd	1.6	3.7	5.4	6.6

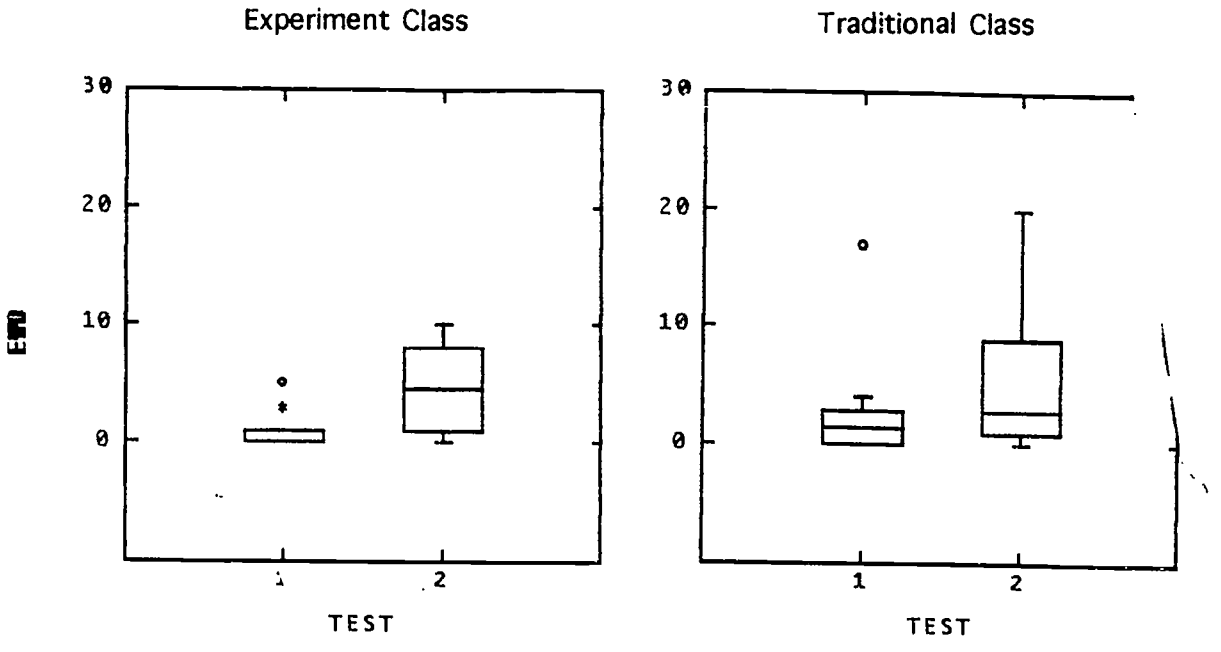


Table Three
H for the Role of Writer

H Idea units are coded as phatic if they are backchannels, pause fillers, and marker of politeness.

"umm . . ."

"Yeah."

"Thank you."

	Experiment Class		Traditional Class	
	pre-test	post-test	pre-test	post-test
min	1.0	2.0	1.0	0.0
max	16.0	16.0	21.0	36.0
range	15.0	14.0	20.0	36.0
mean	5.2	7.6	7.5	8.4
sd	4.1	3.9	6.6	10.8

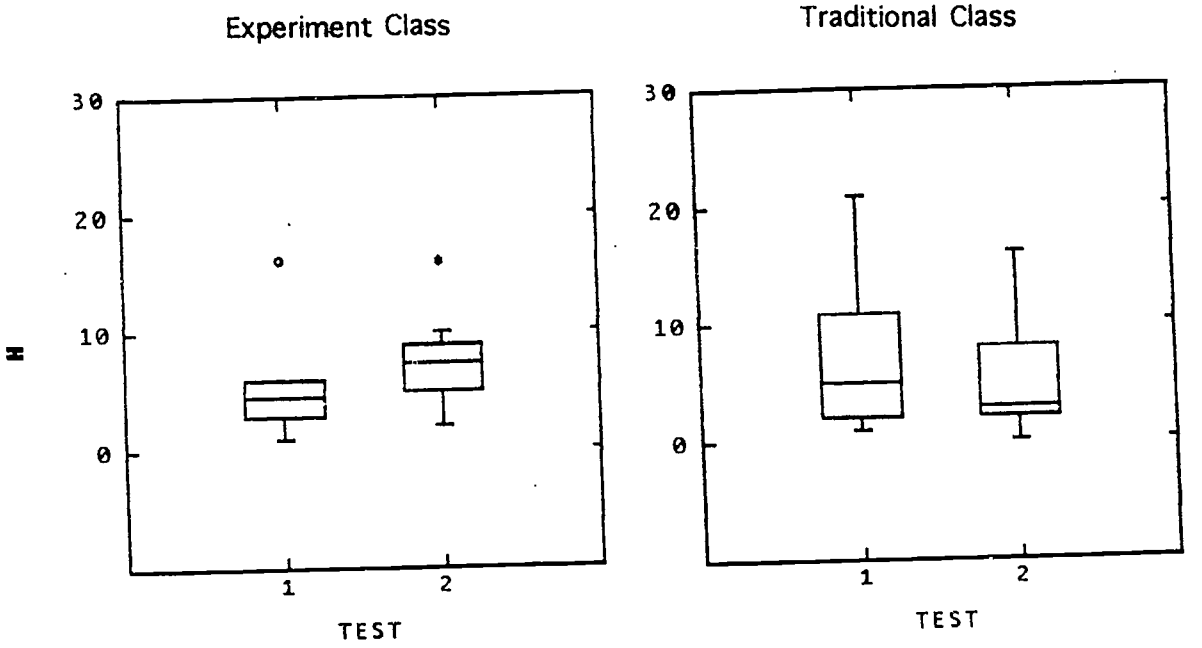


Table Four
EWd for Role of Responder

EWd Elicits information about a piece of student writing at the discourse level; includes concerns of audience and purpose, organization, and grammar above the sentence level.

	Experiment Class		Traditional Class	
	pre-test	post-test	pre-test	post-test
min	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
max	1.0	2.0	10.5	3.5
range	1.0	2.0	10.5	3.5
mean	0.2	0.7	2.2	1.3
sd	0.4	0.7	3.2	1.3

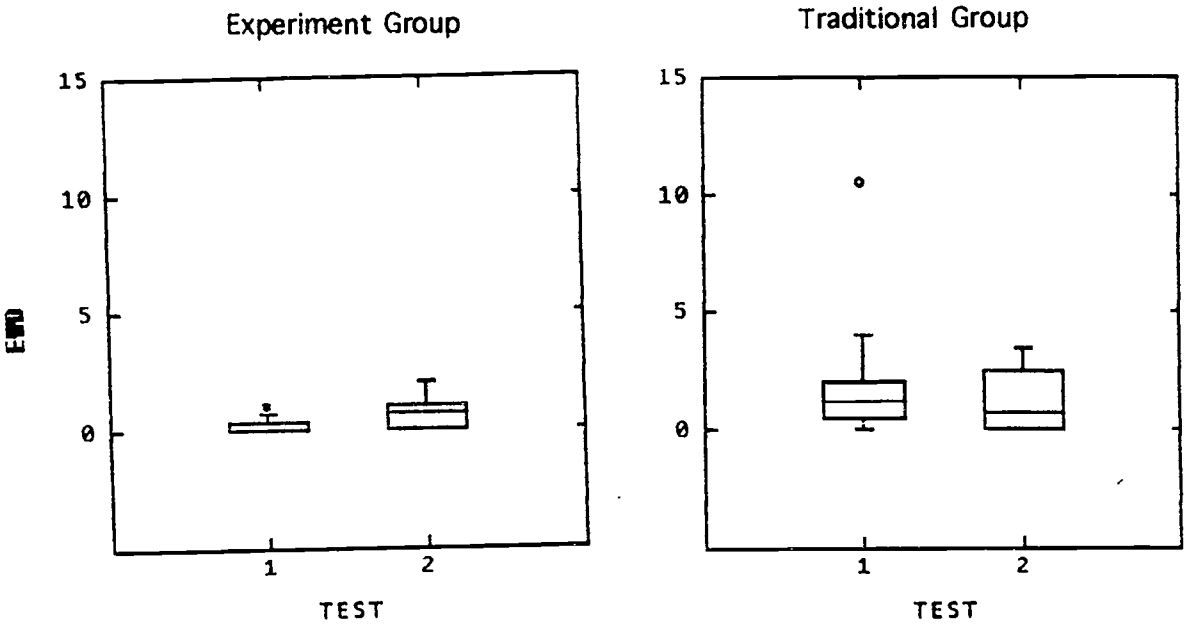


Table Five
DWd for Role of Responder

DWd Directs the writer to revise his/her paper.

"You might wanna expand on that."

"And then put your thesis in your beginning paragraph."

"And I would also say cut down on the quotes."

	Experiment Class		Traditional Class	
	pre-test	post-test	pre-test	post-test
min	0.0	1.5	0.0	0.0
max	6.3	22.0	26.3	22.0
range	6.3	20.5	26.3	22.0
mean	1.6	9.4	8.2	7.6
sd	2.0	6.4	7.8	7.2

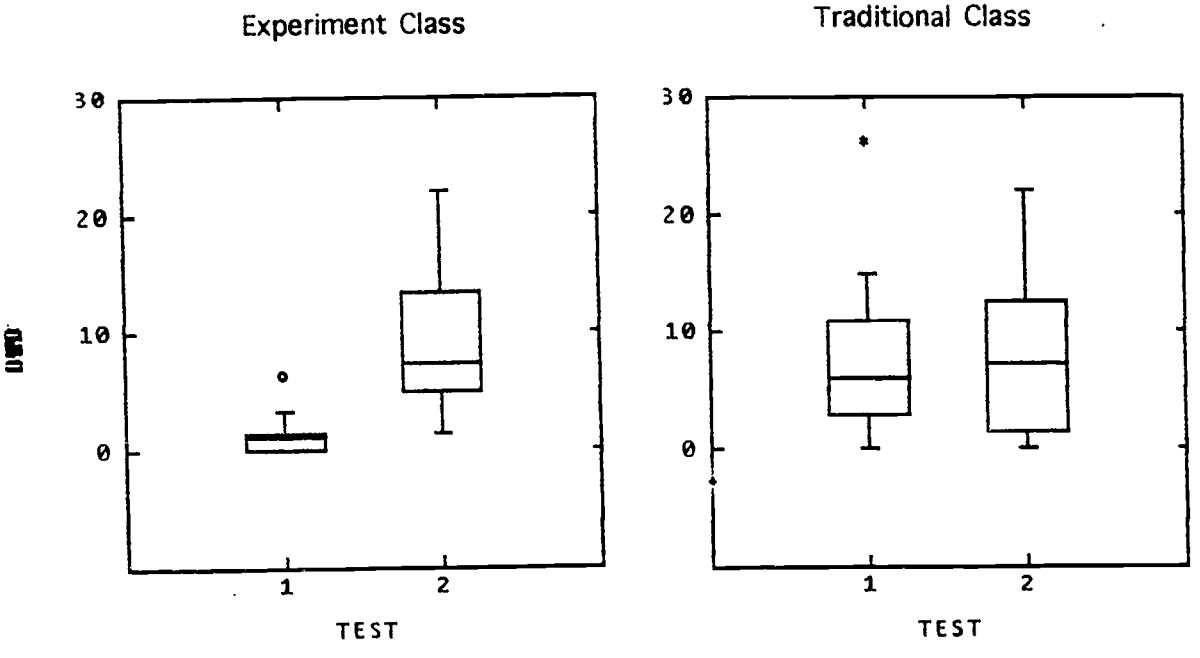
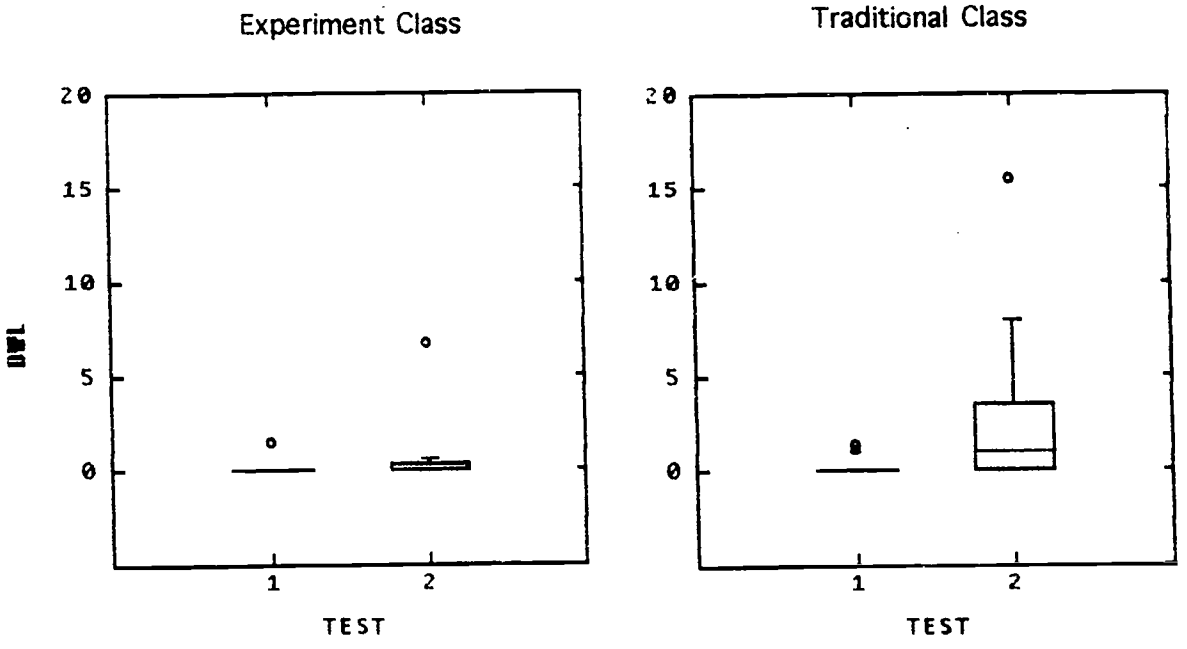


Table Six
DWI for Role of Responder

DWI Directs the writer to edit his/her paper.

"Maybe just say 'on the other hand' [instead of 'while on the other hand']"

	Experiment Class		Traditional Class	
	pre-test	post-test	pre-test	post-test
min	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
max	1.5	6.7	1.3	15.5
range	1.5	6.7	1.3	15.5
mean	0.2	0.8	0.2	3.2
sd	0.5	2.1	0.5	5.0



responder, the traditional group's subjects had an average of 8.3 revision idea units, while their counterparts in the experiment group had only 1.6. Although the differences were not statistically significant as determined by analyses of variance, they were substantial. What can account for them?

Motivation, to the degree that it correlates with the purposefulness of a declared major, may be a partial answer. Of the 22 students and ten subjects in the experiment class, ten and four, respectively, had not decided on a major. In the traditional class, in contrast, of the 24 students and ten subjects, only six and two, respectively, had not.

Another may be gender. There is a considerable amount of scholarly literature that indicates there are substantial cultural differences between men and women in our society, and that those differences are manifested in language use. In terms of epistemology, Belenky et. al. (1986), for example, contend that many women engage in "connected knowing" based on empathy and finding common ground with others. Tannen (1990), similarly describes women as often using "rapport-talk:" "a way of establishing connections and negotiating relationships. Emphasis in placed on displaying similarities and matching experiences" (p. 77). Men, on the other hand, practice "report-talk," a use of language that preserves independence and maintains status in a hierarchical setting.

In light of these language differences, one may conclude that women feel more comfortable with peer response as endeavors of mutual assistance and support, whereas men may regard them as potentially face-threatening. In this study, seven women and three men were the traditional group's subjects; the ratio of women to men among the experiment group subjects was six to four.

Changes from Pre- to Post-Test and Across Groups

The statistics and box plots indicate that the experiment group improved its performance from one test to another by a fair margin on three measures. In the role of writer, the subjects asked many more questions of their peers, and they were more phatic. A dramatic increase occured in the role of responder, where the subjects made many more revision suggestions per episode than they had in the pre-test.

The results for the traditional group are more problematic, even troubling. One would have hoped for a modest increase in the subjects' performance on these critical measures in light of the training that they had received in class. But this was not the case. In fact, these subjects were less phatic in the role of writer on the post-test than they had been on the pre-test; in the role of responder they asked fewer questions and made fewer revision suggestions than they had before. The responders did, however,

sharply increase their number of editing suggestions, in spite of the instructor's advice that the peer groups should focus on revision.

Discussion

There are several tentative conclusions and implications for teaching that may be drawn from this research. One is that peer response groups are characterized by tremendous variation. This is only to be expected, when people who have different conversational styles--for any number of reasons; gender, ethnicity, social class, age--are asked to work together on a task that can be very face-threatening. For research purposes, this variation is compounded by the fact that subjects are not facing a common experience; they are not, so to speak, starting at the same point, because no two people are commenting on the same papers. And those papers can range from a very polished, essentially finished piece of writing to a freewrite that a groupmate scribbled out just a half an hour before class.

Yet the literature extant on peer response does not take account of this variation. Conclusions have been drawn and recommendations for teaching have been made on the basis of research that presents only mean scores. Sommers and Lawrence (1992), for example, present evidence in the form of mean scores that "student-directed" peer response groups such as the ones used in this study are unfair to women, and that teachers should have their students use "teacher-directed" groups (i.e., ones that use Elbow's [1973] procedure) instead. What they say may be true. But without some description of the variation among men and among women, and between student-directed and teacher-directed groups, individual differences may be subsumed with unforeseen results for those individuals.

Teacher conferences may be a good solution to this essentializing. By meeting with individuals, and helping them to determine the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of writing, every student can go to his/her peers feeling a sense of empowerment.

And this empowerment has a transfer effect. The teacher conferences were a successful modeling technique. Students who had them were able to develop some generalizations about the kinds of comments that would be helpful to their peers and to apply those generalizations to the new writers and pieces of writing that they subsequently encountered.

The students in the other class of this study, on the other hand, seem to have become discouraged. They represent a serious challenge to those teachers who use the traditional modeling techniques or those who, like DiPardo and Freedman (1988), advocate a laissez-faire approach to peer response. Their experience is a disheartening

indication of the need for some form of intensive training in order to make peer response successful.

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Appendix One

Rubric for Coding Idea Units

An asterisk indicates a combination of function, attention area, and focus not present in the idea units of this data set.

"Group" Attention Area

Code	*Rubric*
EGp	Elicits information about group procedure regarding 1 the ordering of episodes; "Who should we start with?" 2 the teacher's instructions on how to conduct the prg. "Umm, we're not supposed to talk about the exact paper?"
DGp	Directs the group's procedures regarding 1 the ordering of episodes; "Well, why don't you talk about yours [ie your paper] first?" "I say we elect you [ie to have the first paper under discussion]." 2 the teacher's instructions. "He [ie the teacher] said you have to start off with how you felt about your paper first."
IGp	Informs about group procedures 1 by signalling the beginning of a new episode; "Now Baydon's [paper]. . ." "All right--Carolyn's [paper]." 2 in response to idea units coded EGp or DGp. "Can I talk about hers first?" [EGp] "She's supposed to do it first." [IGp]
EGx	Elicits information about the context of the group regarding the setting, props, and identity of the participants; "Who's got a textbook?" "Who's Wendi?"
DGx*	
IGx	Informs

1 about what a peer thought or wrote about a writer's paper before the prg meeting;

"When I first started reading it I was thinking 'another AIDS paper.'"

2 in response to an idea unit coded EGx.

"Who's Wendi?" [EGx]

"I'm Wendi." [IGx]

EGd — Elicits information about a new topic within an episode.

"Anything else?" [said by the writer to a peer responder]

DGd — Directs a peer responder to begin or continue his/her comments about a paper within an episode.

"Go right ahead." [said by one peer to another, indicating that she has finished her comments and that he should begin]

IGd — 1 Signals a new topic within an episode;

"Oh, in your second paragraph?" [said by responder to writer]

"OK."

"All right."

2 informs in response to an idea unit coded EGd or DGd.

"Is that all?" [EGd; writer to peer]

"Yeah." [IGd]

EGI*

DGI*

IGI*

"Writing" Attention Area

Code	*Rubric*
EWp	Elicits information about the writing assignment. "Were you supposed to define it from two perspectives?"
DWp*	[This code, which indicated any revision or editing suggestion in the Gere and Abbott study, has been reapportioned into DWd and DWI here]

IWp

1 Informs about the writer's composing process;

"So I picked dates,

"kinda semi-logical,

"um I didn't know how to go about it."

2 responds to an idea unit coded EWp.

"Were you supposed to define it from two perspectives?" [EWp]

"No, the first question was define ethics for yourself." [IWp]

EWx

Elicits information

1 about the text from which the assignment is to be written;

"Where is that, anyway?" [one group member asking another for the location of a cite within a text]

2 about a group member's extratextual knowledge.

"What was happening in France in the 17th century?"

DWx*

IWx

1 Informs about the selection in the textbook from which the writing assignment is derived;

"It was kinda hard to understand this story."

2 informs about on-topic but extratextual knowledge;

"I'd go so far as to say myself that ah . . .

"people don't really know exactly what melody, tone, rhythm, color, harmonic movement are."

3 quotes verbatim from the student text under discussion.

"You say [reads from text]."

4 responds to an idea unit coded EWx.

"Wait where is this now?" [EWx; where is passage in text]

"At the very last." [IWx]

EWd

Elicits information about a piece of student writing at the discourse level; includes concerns of audience and purpose, organization, and grammar above the sentence level.

"Do you think it [ie the writer's paper] was too wordy?"

"Do you think I need to expand more?"

Writers' speculative comments that seem to seek confirmation from peers have also been coded EWd.

"I think maybe I could have expounded on the mood,

"I think I should write more about that."

DWd — Directs the writer to revise his/her paper.

"You might wanna expand on that."

"And then put your thesis in your beginning paragraph."

"You need to compare more.

"I mean there are more things to compare in the poems than just that."

"And I would also say cut down on the quotes."

IWd — 1 Informs about a piece of student writing;

"In paragraph five, I like your explanation and interpretation."

"This is a really good example,
explaining this,
what you have right here."

2 responds to idea units coded EWd and DWd.

"You could tie in some other ideas in your paper, [Dwd]

"to make it a little more clear, [Dwd]

"I think." [DWd]

"I think so too." [IWd; writer in response to peer suggestion]

EWI — Elicits information about sentence-level grammar, spelling, or punctuation in a piece of student writing.

"Do you mean 'unfoil?'" [asked of writer by peer]

DWI — Directs the writer to edit his/her paper.

"You say 'while on the other hand.' [IWx]

"maybe just say 'on the other hand.'" [DWI]

IWI — 1 Informs about sentence-level grammar, spelling, or punctuation in a piece of student writing;

"I think you use a different word instead of 'rebellion,' [IWI]

"like the word I used in my paper 'attitude.'" [IWI]

2 responds to an idea unit coded EWI or DWI.

"Maybe word that a little bit differently." [DWI]
"OK." [IWI]

H Idea units are coded as phatic if they

1 are backchannels;

S1 I also said that.
I think you should include Plato and Caesar,
and include more like the history of the word.
S2 Yeah. [H]
S1 But I think you had--
I really like your introduction.

2 are pause fillers;

"umm . . ."

3 consist of "global" praise;

"I really liked your paper."
"It's really good."

4 are markers of politeness.

"Thank you."
"You're welcome."

N/A When a speaker is interrupted, or when a speaker changes his/her chain of thought and cannot be determined to have resumed the initial thought, the incomplete idea units are given this code.

"So that--"
"I mean I keep--"
"I can't really-I can't really . . ."